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SUBJECT: CODEL PAYNE VISIT TO JUBA/ABYEI

Classified By: CDA a.i. Mark Asquino for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d)

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Congressman Donald Payne and Congressional Research Staff Member Ted Dagne traveled to Juba and Abyei during August 9-11 to gauge the status of Abyei Road Map implementation and to hear SPLM views on the pace of CPA implementation. In Abyei, Payne was troubled by evidence of a long-term looting campaign by the SAF. He saw buildings, including USAID projects previously spared by the May 20 violence, dismantled) with windows, doors, and generators carried away. Alleged SAF intransigence regarding Abyei/JIU transformation further impressed upon him that lasting stability in Abyei will remain elusive without more effort and engagement. END SUMMARY.

ABYEI: A CONTRAST IN HOPE AND HORROR

12. (SBU) CODEL Payne joined a delegation from the GOSS Office of the Presidency to travel to Abyei and Agok on August 10. In addition to a small contingent of Southern media, travelers included Minister for Presidential Affairs Luka Biong Deng, Southern Sudan Legislative Assembly (SSLA) Legal Committee Chairman Deng Arop, SSLA MP (Abyei) Arop Madut, and Presidential Affairs Senior Advisor Deng Yai.

13. (SBU) Minister Deng explained in a pre-departure briefing that the grassroots population of Abyei continued to be unhappy with the decision to appoint a Misseriya to the Deputy Administrator position. However, only one of the region,s 27 administrative positions, he said, was to be filled by a Misseriya. Four will be filled by &other Sudanese8 residents of the area (not Misseriya), while the rest of the seats will be occupied by Ngok Dinka.

14. (SBU) On finances, the Minister said that June revenue transfers have already been secured for the region) the first since the CPA,s signing in 2005. Abyei will receive \$15 million per month, retroactive to January 2005, while Warrap and Southern Kordofan states will receive \$2 million per month covering the same period. The Ngok Dinka and Misseriya communities will also receive \$2 million each per month. Deng noted that the Kiir/Taha-managed &Abyei unity fund8 of roughly \$17 million per month will be used along the entire North/South border per the Abyei roadmap.

15. (SBU) In Abyei town, Codel Payne viewed vegetative overgrowth enveloping the charred remains of tukuls as well as the nearly completely demolished market area. The fields surrounding the town are now covered in knee and shoulder-high grasses, and UNMAO fears many areas still contain land mines and other ordnance left by the combatants. Most troubling to the Congressman was the fact that structures previously damaged during the May conflict, but

otherwise intact, were subsequently dismantled) some provocatively so. While a USAID-funded electricity cooperative was found to be stripped bare, with nothing left to the structure save for its concrete shell, the SPLM/Abyei Headquarters directly across the street from an intact NCP facility had been obliterated. Cement veranda posts were stacked like cordwood under a heap of rubble that only three months earlier was a wholly-untouched building. The headquarters sign, emblazoned with pictures of John Garang and Salva Kiir, was torn in two. As the convoy moved from the wreckage, Yai pointedly asked &if your partner did this, would you remain allied to them?8 Despite disheartening signs of looting (one UNMIS milob noted that looting continued unabated for 45 straight days), some IDPs have returned on their own. A small market area is now established, and in contrast to the ghost-town of Abyei witnessed in May, the CODEL saw women walking down the street and children playing soccer. A ten-truck convoy of relief supplies (allegedly from an unspecified Islamic relief agency) was awaiting clearance through a JIU-manned check-point.

¶16. (SBU) Abyei JIU Commander MG Valentino detailed for the CODEL the pace of JIU deployment and the unit,s current challenges. The Abyei JIU, he said, was fully deployed on July 26, and became the only military entity in Abyei save for one SAF battalion, which remains just south of the town of Difra (an SPLA police unit also needs to move out of Agok). (NOTE: Per Valentino, the SAF had committed to removing that unit northwards by August 2. By August 10 that had still not occurred. The former commander of the 31 Brigade is now in Nyama, and has pledged to move by August

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¶16. END NOTE). Minister Deng registered shock at the news, noting that he had been informed earlier that the SAF contingent in Difra was far smaller. The JIU,s area of responsibility extends 7 km past Difra. Currently, JIU forces occupy positions at Manyeng, Todaj, and Abyei town. A future deployment to Difra is planned.

¶17. (SBU) Directing his comments to GOSS Minister for Presidential Affairs Deng, Valentino outlined an extensive list of present challenges. Despite UNMAO declaring 1,267,000 square meters of Abyei town free from landmines, the center of town had not yet been cleared of unexploded ordinance, and Valentino remains uncertain as to the extent of mines in the outlying areas. In addition, human remains still need to be removed from the town center. Valentino demanded that the GOSS or Abyei Administration unilaterally request that the ICRC return to the town so that disposition of these remains and final demining can occur.

¶18. (SBU) The JIU Commander cited two SAF-instigated violations of the Abyei Roadmap that taxed his confidence in the document,s viability. Contrary to the stipulation that the Abyei JIU would be made up of units from outside of the disputed region, Valentino noted that the SAF JIU contingent had been built from units taken from the SAF,s 31st (Abyei), 25th (Muglad), 89th (Meriem), and 28th (Helig) brigades (his own SAF deputy is from the notorious 31st Brigade). Additionally, SAF leadership on the CPA-mandated Joint Defense Board continued to refuse to accept or transfer aid to the Abyei JIU, despite the July 18 agreement that the Abyei JIU would become the national standard-bearer) and be fully equipped, supplied, and trained. As a result of continued SAF intransigence within the JDB, the JIU to date remains wholly dependent on UNMIS for the majority of its logistical support.

¶19. (SBU) Additionally, Valentino told a surprised Deng that SAF Joint Defense Board representatives were refusing to sign or authorize agreements permitting international assistance to the JIU) this despite their own continued refusal to release food, funds, and equipment to the reconstituted force in Abyei. Deng later explained that he had just concluded

JIU funding discussions with the Dutch and Norwegian Ambassadors while in Khartoum the week of August 4. UK Consul (Juba) told ConGen staff that the UK had dedicated assistance ready to go to the Abyei JIU once it was formed.

¶10. (SBU) In Agok, the epicenter of humanitarian relief efforts to aid Abyei IDPs, SPLM Abyei Chairman Edward Lino briefed the CODEL on humanitarian challenges. He lauded WFP for what he termed &their most successful relief effort in the history of their involvement in the Sudan.8 Transfers of late-seed sorghum from Upper Nile State, and a gift of three tractors from Warrap state, were allowing his largely shadow-administration to manage mid-term feeding needs of the IDPs well past the current window of planned UN assistance. Shelter, he said, remains an immediate challenge, particularly once IDPs return to Abyei itself.

¶11. (C) Asked to speak to an assembled group of administration officials, SPLM officers, and assembled media, Congressman Payne spoke of U.S. assistance to Southern Sudan and the Three Areas, and of &our mutual interest in justice and peace, one that allows us to stand in solidarity to the SPLM.8 Dagne offered commentary as well, noting that &until these people return home, there will be no peace in Sudan. And there is not peace in Sudan while that partner in Khartoum destroys schools and tears down photos of John and Salva. You need to question that partnership."

¶12. (C) Comment: The establishment and functioning of the Abyei Interim Administration and material support by the SAF, SPLA, and UNMIS to the JIU and JIPU are the two most important factors that will determine the recovery and stability of Abyei going forward. The CPA partners also need to make sure that Abyei oil money goes toward reconstruction and development of the town and the region. Edward Lino acted on several occasions as an agent provocateur in Abyei and is now associated with the conflict; a civilian non-partisan administration needs to take charge immediately so that Lino's role merely as an SPLM representative can be clarified for the local population.
ASQUINO